اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا

Quran English Translation and Tafseer

Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah Al-Layl (The Night) - 92

سُوْرَةُ اللَّيْلِ مَكِّيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

**(**In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate**)**

وَ الَّيْلِ اِذَا يَغْشٰى ﴿١﴾

(92:1) By the night when it enshrouds,

وَ النَّهَارِ اِذَا تَجَلّٰى ﴿٢﴾

(92:2) and by the day when it breaks in its glory,

وَ مَا خَلَقَ الذَّكَرَ وَ الْاُنْثٰى ﴿٣﴾

(92:3) and by Him Who created the male and the female:

اِنَّ سَعْيَكُمْ لَشَتّٰى ﴿٤﴾

(92:4) surely your strivings are divergent. (1)

(1) This is that for which an oath has been sworn by the night and the day, and the creation of the male and the female. It means to say: Just as the night and the day, and the male and the female, are different from each other, and their effects and results are mutually contradictory, so are the aims and objects for which men are endeavoring and struggling; different in their nature and contradictory with regard to their results. In the following verses, it has been told that all these divided endeavors are divided into two main kinds.

فَاَمَّا مَنۡ اَعۡطٰی وَ اتَّقٰی ۙ﴿۵﴾

(92:5) As for him who gave out his wealth (for Allah's sake) and abstained (from disobeying Him),

وَ صَدَّقَ بِالۡحُسۡنٰی ۙ﴿۶﴾

(92:6) and affirmed the Truth of goodness: (2)

(2) This is the first kind of endeavors, which includes three things, and a little consideration shows that they comprehend all virtues:

(1) That man should refrain from wealth-worship, but should spend whatever Allah has given him generously in rendering Allah’s and His servants’ rights, for good works and for helping others.

(2) That he should fear God and refrain from things which cause His displeasure in his moral, social, economic and other dealings with the people.

(3) That he should believe in goodness. Goodness is a comprehensive word, which includes goodness of belief, morals and acts. Goodness of belief means that one should give up polytheism, atheism, and disbelief, and affirm faith in Tauhid, the Hereafter and Prophethood. Affirming belief in goodness of morals and acts is that one should not be doing good and right merely unconsciously, outside a definite system, but one should acknowledge as right and sound the system of goodness which God has sent, which combines every kind of goodness in all its forms and aspects into a system comprehensively called the divine shariah.

فَسَنُیَسِّرُہٗ لِلۡیُسۡرٰی ۚ﴿۷﴾

(92:7) We shall facilitate for him the Way to Bliss. (3)

(3) This is the result of the first kind of endeavoring and struggling. The easy way implies the way which is in accordance with human nature, which is in accordance with the will of the Creator, Who has created man and the whole universe. It is a way in which man has not to fight his conscience, in which he does not have to force his faculties of mind and energies of body into doing works for which they are not given but to do things for which they have actually been given him. It is a way in which man has not to experience war, resistance and conflict on every side, which he has to experience in a life full of sin, but a human society in which at every step he experiences peace and concord, appreciation and honor. Obviously, the person who spends his wealth for public welfare, treats every other person kindly and well, whose life is free from crime, sin and immorality, who is righteous and fair in his dealings, who neither cheats others nor proves false in his promises, from whom no one apprehends dishonesty, injustice and excess, and with whose character no one finds any fault, will in any case be honored and respected in any society, however, corrupt and depraved it may be. Hearts will be attracted towards him in esteem and regard; his own heart and conscience will be satisfied, and he will attain to dignity in society which no immoral person can ever attain. This same thing has been expressed in Surah An-Nahl, thus: Whoever does righteous deeds whether male or female, provided that he is a believer, We will surely grant him to live a pure life in this world (Verse 97), and in Surah Maryam, thus: The Merciful will fill with love the hearts of those who believe and do righteous deeds (Verse 96). This then is the way in which there is nothing but joy and tranquility for man, for the world till the Hereafter. Its results are not transient and temporary but eternal and everlasting.

Concerning this Allah says: We shall facilitate for him the easy way. It means to say: When after affirming goodness he decides that this way alone suits him, and the evil way does not suit him, and when by making sacrifices and adopting the life of taqva practically he proves that he is true in his affirmation, Allah will make easy for him to walk this way. Then, to commit evil will become difficult for him, and to do good easy. When unlawful

wealth comes before him, he will not regard it as a good bargain, but consider it a hot piece of burning coal, which he cannot hold in his hand. When opportunities for sin appear before him, he will not rush to seize them as opportunities for pleasure and enjoyment, but will look upon them as gates to Hell and will flee from them. The Prayer will not be hard for him, but he will have no internal peace until he has performed it at its appointed time. He will not feel hurt when paying the Zakat, but will regard his wealth as impure until he has paid out the Zakat from it. In short, at every step, Allah will favor him with His grace and help him to follow this way; conditions will be made favorable for him and he will be helped out of every difficulty.

Now, the question arises that in Surah Al-Balad, this very way has been called an uphill road, and here it has been described as an easy way. How can the two things be reconciled? The answer is that before a man has adopted this way, it appears to be a steep, uphill road, for ascending which he has to fight his desires, his materialistic members of the family, his relatives, his friends and those with whom he has social and other dealings, and above all Satan, for each one of them obstructs his way, and makes it seem dreadful. But after man has affirmed goodness and resolved to follow this way, and giving away his wealth in the cause of God and adopting the way of taqva, has practically strengthened his resolve, ascending the steep road becomes easy and slipping into the abyss of moral depravities becomes difficult for him.

وَ اَمَّا مَنۡۢ بَخِلَ وَ اسۡتَغۡنٰی ۙ﴿۸﴾

(92:8) As for him who was a miser and behaved with aversion (to Allah),

وَ كَذَّبَ بِالۡحُسۡنٰی ۙ﴿۹﴾

(92:9) and denied the Truth of goodness: [4]

(4) This is the second kind of human endeavoring, which in every part of it is different from the corresponding part of the first kind. Niggardliness (bukhl) is not merely the niggardliness because of which people generally regard a person as niggardly if he hoards money: neither spends it on himself nor on his children, but bukhl here implies to refrain from spending in the cause of Allah and public welfare. According to this, niggardly is every person who spends generously, rather squanders money, on his self, for his own ease and comfort, interests and enjoyments, but, as for a good cause, spends nothing, or, if at all, he spends anything, it is for display, or to win a reputation and name, or to have access to officers, or to obtain some benefit and gain. Independence of God implies that one should make worldly, material benefits only the object of all his endeavoring and strivings and being independent of God should least care to see what pleases Him and what displeases Him. As for belying goodness, it is in sharp contrast to believing in goodness in every detail, therefore, it need not be explained here as it has already been explained above.

فَسَنُيَسِّرُهٗ لِلْعُسْرٰى ؕ ١٠

(92:10) We shall facilitate for him the way to Hardship, (5)

(5) This way has been called the hard way, for although the one who follows it, does so for the sake of material benefits, worldly enjoyments and superficial successes, yet while following it he is always at war with his nature, his conscience, the laws made by the Creator of the universe and the society in which he lives. When he transgresses all moral limits of truth, honesty, nobility, purity and chastity, and endeavors to satisfy his interests and desires in every way, when the people feel harmed by him rather than benefiting from him, and when he encroaches upon the rights of others and violates people’s honor, he feels disgraced in his own eyes and has to clash at every step with the society in which he lives. If he is weak, he has to suffer every kind of punishment on account of his conduct, and if he is wealthy,

strong and influential, the world may lie low before him, but no one cherishes any good wishes, any feeling of honor and love for him; so much so that even his associates and companions regard him as a wicked man. And this thing is not only restricted to individuals, even when a strong and powerful nation transgresses the bounds of morality and adopts an immoral conduct, in arrogance of pride and wealth, it earns on the one hand, the enmity of the outside world: on the other, its own society falls a victim to all sorts of crime, prevalence of suicide, intoxication, venereal diseases, destruction of family life, waywardness of the new generation, class conflict and ever-increasing injustice and tyranny. So much so that when it falls from its position of prestige, it leaves nothing behind except curses and condemnation for itself in the history of the world.

As for saying that: So We shall make smooth for him the path of difficulty, it means: We shall facilitate for him the hard ways. He will be deprived of the grace to follow the way of good, gates of evil will be opened up for him, means and resources for the same will be provided for him, doing evil will become easy, and doing good will become toilsome and risky for him. This same theme has been expressed at another place in the Quran, thus: So whomever Allah wills to guide aright, He makes his breast wide open to Islam, and whomever He wills to let go astray, he makes his breast narrow and squeezes it so tightly that (at the very idea of Islam) he begins to feel as though his soul were climbing up towards the sky. (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat125). At another place it has been said: No doubt, Salat is a hard task but not for the obedient servants. (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 46). And about the hypocrites it has been said: When they come to offer the Salat, they come reluctantly and they spend in the way of Allah with unwilling hearts. (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 54), and that: There are such among them who regard what they spend in the way of Allah as a penalty. (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 98).

وَ مَا يُغْنِىۡ عَنْهُ مَالُهٗۤ اِذَا تَرَدّٰى ؕ ﴿۱۱﴾

(92:11) and his wealth shall be of no avail to him when he perishes. [6]

(6) In other words it means that he has to die one day and leave behind in the world whatever he had amassed for his ease and enjoyment. If he did not earn and send forward something for the Hereafter, what would this wealth avail him? He will not take his palatial residence, his majestic conveyance, his property and wealth into the grave.

اِنَّ عَلَیۡنَا لَلۡہُدٰی ﴿۱۲﴾

(92:12) Surely it is for Us to show the Right Way, (7)

(7) That is, Allah as the Creator of man has on the basis of His wisdom, His justice and His mercy, taken on Himself the responsibility not to leave him uninformed in the world, but to tell him what is the right way and what are the wrong ways, what is good and what is evil, what is lawful and what is unlawful, what attitude and conduct will make him an obedient servant and what attitude and conduct will make him a disobedient servant. This same thing has been expressed in Surah An-Nahl, thus: Allah has taken upon Himself to show the right way, when there are also crooked ways. (Verse 9 Also see E.N. 9 of Surah An-Nahl).

وَ اِنَّ لَنَا لَلۡاٰخِرَۃَ وَ الۡاُوۡلٰی ﴿۱۳﴾

(92:13) and to Us belong the Next Life and the present. (8)

(8) This statement has several meanings and all are correct:

(1) That from the world till the Hereafter, you are nowhere beyond Our grasp, for Ours are both this and the next world.

(2) That both this world and the Hereafter are in any case under Our sovereignty, whether you follow the way shown by Us or not. If you adopt error, you will not harm Us but only yourselves; and if you adopt the right way, you will not do any good to Us, but will do good only to yourselves. Your disobedience cannot cause any decrease in Our sovereignty and your obedience cannot cause any increase in it.

(3) That We alone are Master of both the worlds. If you seek the world, We alone can grant it; and if you seek the well being of the Hereafter, We alone have the power to bestow it too.

This very theme has been expressed in Surah Ale-Imran, Ayat 145: Whoso makes effort with the intention of the reward of this world,

We will reward him in this world, and whoso makes effort with the intention of the reward of the Hereafter, We shall grant him thereof. And the same has been expressed in Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 20, thus: Whoever seeks the harvest of the Hereafter, We do increase his harvest; and whoever seeks the harvest of this world, We do give him of it here, but in the Hereafter he will have no share at all. (For explanation, see (E.N. 105 of Surah Al-Imran); (E.N. 37 of Surah Ash-Shura).

فَاَنۡذَرۡتُكُمۡ نَارًا تَلَظّٰى ۚ ١٤

(92:14) I have now warned you of a Blazing Fire,

لَا يَصۡلٰٮهَاۤ اِلَّا الۡاَشۡقَى ۙ ١٥

(92:15) where none shall burn except the most wicked,

الَّذِىۡ كَذَّبَ وَ تَوَلّٰى ؕ ١٦

(92:16) who rejected the Truth, calling it falsehood and turned his back on it.

وَ سَيُجَنَّبُهَا الۡاَتۡقَى ۙ ١٧

(92:17) But the God-fearing shall be kept away from it,

الَّذِىۡ يُؤۡتِىۡ مَالَهٗ يَتَزَكّٰى ۚ ١٨

(92:18) the Godfearing who spends his wealth to purify himself; (9)

(9) This does not mean that no one will enter the fire except the most wretched one, and no one will be saved from it except the most pious one but the object is to describe the extremely contradictory fate of the two extremely contradictory characters. One of them is the person who belies the teachings of Allah and

His Messenger and turns away from obedience; the other one is the person, who not only believes but also spends his wealth in the cause of Allah sincerely, without any desire for display and reputation, only in order to be regarded as a pure man in His eyes. Both these types of character were present in the Makkah society of that day. Therefore, without mentioning any name, the people have been told that the man of the first type of character only will burn in the fire of Hell and not the man of the second type of character. The man of the second type of character only will be kept away from it and not the man of the first type of character.

وَ مَا لِاَحَدٍ عِنۡدَہٗ مِنۡ نِّعۡمَۃٍ تُجۡزٰۤی ﴿۱۹﴾

(92:19) not as payment for any favours that he received,

اِلَّا ابْتِغَآءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْاَعْلٰى ﴿٢٠﴾

(92:20) but only to seek the good pleasure of his Lord Most High. (10)

(10) This is further explanation of the sincerity of the pious man. He was not indebted in any way to the people on whom he spends his wealth so that he may be doing so in order to repay for favors received, or may be giving gifts and holding banquets to them in order to further benefit from them, but he is helping such people only in order to seek the goodwill of his Lord, the Supreme. He was neither indebted to them before, nor he expects any favors from them in the future. Its best illustration is the act of Abu Bakr Siddiq, he would purchase and set free the poor slaves and slaves-girls who accepted Islam in Makkah and were cruelly treated by their masters on that account. Ibn Jarir and Ibn Asakir have related, on the authority of Amir bin Abdullah bin Zubair, that when Abu Bakr's father saw him spending money to purchase the freedom of the poor slaves and slave-girls, he said to him: Son, I see that you are getting the weak people free; had you spent this money on the freedom of strong, young men, they would have become your helpers and supporters. Abu Bakr replied: Dear father, I only seek the reward that is with Allah.

وَ لَسَوْفَ يَرْضٰى ﴿٢١﴾

(92:21) He will surely be well-pleased (with him). (11)

(11) This verse can have two meanings and both are correct:

(1) That Allah certainly will be well pleased with him.

(2) That Allah soon will bless this man with so much that he will be happy